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SUBJECT: WEST AFRICAN TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS STRATEGY

1. This final draft regional strategy to address Trafficking in Persons in West Africa is presented to Department's African Affairs Bureau for endorsement. This strategy was reflects a consensus among nine embassies and several Washington agencies and bureaus (DRL, G/TIP, USAID/WID) represented at a December 2001 conference on TIP held in Lagos. This draft was cleared with Embassies Abidjan, Abuja, Accra, Bamako, Conakry, Cotonou, Libreville, Lome, and Ouagadougou.

The AF Bureau's West Africa Regional Strategy to
Combat Trafficking in Persons

2. Summary: The serious human rights crime of Trafficking in Persons appears on the rise in West and Central Africa and confronting this problem is a USG priority. Through this strategy, U.S. Missions in the region will employ limited USG resources to engage host governments, NGOs and regional organizations to implement effective actions aimed at prosecuting traffickers and their accomplices, protecting rescued and repatriated trafficking victims and preventing the occurrence of new trafficking incidents. The African Affairs Bureau and Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons will guide Missions in the region and coordinate the allocation of resources.
End Summary

A. Strategic Goal

3. "U.S. Missions in West and Central Africa will help host governments, regional organizations, and NGOs to develop and strengthen the mechanisms necessary to reduce the incidence of trafficking in persons in the region."

4. This goal should be incorporated into Mission Performance Plans of Missions throughout the region as a sub-goal/objective under MPP Goals "DE - Democracy" and "IC - International Crime."

B. Introduction

5. According to UNICEF, hundreds of thousands of persons, especially women and children from West and Central Africa, have become victims of trafficking for forced labor exploitation every year. Described by Secretary Powell as, "one of the most egregious human

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rights violations," trafficking is one of the fastest growing and most profitable criminal enterprises throughout the world. During his address at the recently released Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, Secretary Powell stated that there are at least

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700,000 new victims of trafficking worldwide each year. Considered a serious human and worker rights problem in West and Central Africa, trafficking appears to be on the rise and is fueled by on-going adverse social and economic conditions in the region. Ending this transnational human rights crime is a

priority for the Bush Administration.

16. As women and children are the primary targets of trafficking, the AF Bureau will work with our West African posts to raise host country and international awareness of the vulnerability of these female and child populations. The Governments of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Gabon, Mali, Nigeria and Togo have shown signs of greater awareness, and to varying degrees, are actively engaged in combating the problem. Forms of child trafficking include the traditional practice of child placement for work in the informal commercial sector, agricultural work, domestic servitude, and begging. The trafficking of women tends to be primarily for sexual exploitation and is often conducted by traditional criminal elements. Though the forms and destinations of trafficking vary widely, trafficking victims often work in very difficult and hazardous conditions and in some instances are essentially slaves, held against their will and receiving little or no wages. Many women and girls who are victims of trafficking find themselves working in the commercial sex industry in Africa and Europe. Criminal elements frequently use deception and false advertising to recruit these female victims of trafficking.

17. The US must work cooperatively with host country governments in devising clear short- and long-term strategies to legislate against, enforce and prosecute the traffickers who engage in the buying and selling of persons. Mechanisms must be put in place to educate the population concerning the methods recruiters use. We must also work to rescue those victims of trafficking who are able to escape and who need protection, education or training in order to be reintegrated into society and lead normal, productive lives. Prevention efforts aimed at addressing some of the root causes of trafficking, such as lack of adequate economic opportunities, will also be emphasized.

18. In order to effectively combat trafficking in West Africa (and by extension to Africa as a whole) there is a clear need for a coordinated and integrated regional approach. The AF Bureau, in partnership with G/TIP, INL, DRL, PRM, and IO, is launching a comprehensive regional strategy to combat trafficking of persons in West Africa. This strategy will be coordinated through the regional trafficking coordinator in Lagos, posts in countries most affected by TIP, USG agencies and international donor efforts. Given the limited available resources and many competing demands, it is important to pursue an approach that seeks to identify those areas that will ensure the maximum effect, to complement existing efforts, and to find out from West African governments what they think would help.

1C. Bureau Strategy

19. Definition and Scope: This strategy will use the definition of trafficking in persons incorporated in the UN Transnational Crime Convention's Protocol on Trafficking in Persons:

"The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs."

110. Trafficking in the West and Central African sub-region is a term broadly interpreted that can include prostitution and the traditional "home-work" or placement of children in the informal domestic labor sector. Regarding the sex trade, for the purposes of

this strategy we will focus on the trafficking of girls and women for the sex trade where clear force, coercion or deception is involved - avoiding voluntary prostitution, which is prevalent throughout the sub-region. We will also focus on transnational child trafficking for labor exploitation, such as work on cocoa farms in Cote d'Ivoire, and for domestic servitude and work in the informal commercial sector in Gabon, Benin and eastern Nigeria. While the placement of children (l'enfant placement) as domestic servants is a form of child labor and fits the UN definition of trafficking, it is a complex issue tangled in culturally-accepted traditions not lending itself to easy and clear-cut definition or simple policy formulation. Indeed, many NGOs and government agencies do not accept that the traditional placement of children with relatives or friends in their own countries in order to provide a child with necessary protection and vocational skills is a form of trafficking. Terres des Hommes, an International NGO that has worked on child labor and trafficking issues for several years throughout West Africa, does not as a matter of policy consider "Vidomegon" ("child in trust") in Benin, "Trokosi" in Ghana, and similar child placement practices elsewhere in the region as trafficking.

¶11. In light of this lack of consensus on whether intra-national child placement constitutes trafficking and the limits on USG resources, this strategy will concentrate on the following two forms of trafficking:

-- Transnational Child Trafficking for Labor; and

--Child and Women Trafficking for forced commercial sexual exploitation (largely Nigeria)

¶D. Background -----

¶12. The Intelligence Community is currently working on determining the precise number of persons trafficked for labor exploitation from and within Africa. UNICEF estimates that approximately 200,000 children are trafficked annually within West and Central Africa. According to Nigerian and Italian government estimates, 7-10,000 Nigerian women and girls are trafficked to Italy each year, mostly through neighboring West African countries. An unknown but significant number of Nigerian women are trafficked for sexual exploitation to other European countries, including the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, and the UK. These disparate figures reflect the dearth of information on the scope and complexity of Africa's unique trafficking problems.

¶13. NGOs and international organizations such as the ILO and UNICEF report that thousands of children and women are trafficked each year within Africa to work in domestic services, on agricultural plantations, and in the informal sector. Women and young girls from West Africa are trafficked to Europe to work in the commercial sex industry and as domestic servants.

¶14. Through traditional practices many children are encouraged by their parents to leave home in search of work, or they are lured away from their homes by recruiters with promises of well-paying jobs and a brighter future for the children. The recent discovery of a boat destined for Gabon carrying 131 West African children (mostly Togolese) is an example of how traditional "placement" of children has been exploited to subject children, some as young as six years old, to travel unaccompanied to jobs in neighboring countries. Such job offers are misrepresentations of the type of work they will perform. To add to the complexity of the trafficking dynamic is the fact that porous borders make it difficult to distinguish between illegal and legitimate family cross-border migration.

¶15. Trafficking is a complex reality often with informal, secretive networks. West and Central African countries can be divided into three major categories in the trafficking circuit: "source" or "sending" countries, "transit," and "destination"

countries. Within the sub-region, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria fall into all three categories.

16. Poverty is a common denominator within the West and Central African countries that have significant trafficking problems. For families living below the poverty line, the motive for sending a child to live with friends or relatives to work or to learn trades is often economic. Other factors that contribute to the increased incidence of trafficking are the adult unemployment rate, insufficient public investment in essential economic and social services (especially education) and a paucity of vocational and economic opportunities for youth in rural areas. Many families are unaware of the risks involved in trafficking, including the possibilities of serious maltreatment, sexual exploitation, rape, psychological and/or physical abuse or the sale of a child by the person originally entrusted with him/her.

E. Country Profiles

17. The following are brief profiles of trafficking in key countries of the region:

Benin

18. Benin is a source, transit and destination country for trafficked persons, primarily children. Trafficking also occurs within Benin. Beninese children are trafficked to Ghana, Nigeria, and Gabon for indentured or domestic servitude, work in the informal commercial sector, farm labor, and prostitution. Children from Niger, Togo, and Burkina Faso have been trafficked to Benin for indentured or domestic servitude. Internal trafficking of children in Benin takes place largely in connection with the traditional practice called "vidomegon," whereby poor families, often from rural areas, place a young child, usually a daughter, in the home of a more wealthy family to perform services for that family (often for as long as ten years, or until the child reaches adolescence). The birth family thus avoids the economic burden the child otherwise represents, and expects the child to make contacts and develop life opportunities that would not have been available in their home environment. This work arrangement is different from other forms of child trafficking in that vidomegon is regarded as a private, voluntary agreement directly between the two families.

Burkina Faso

19. Burkina Faso is a source, transit and destination country for internationally trafficked persons, including children. Burkina Faso is an occasional source country for women who travel to Europe to work as domestics but, upon their arrival, are forced into sexual exploitation. Burkina Faso is a transit country for trafficked children, notably from Mali. Children in transit from Mali are often destined for Cote d'Ivoire. Trafficked Malian children are also destined for Burkina Faso. Destinations for trafficked Burkinabe children include Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. In 1999, there were reports of trafficked Burkinabe children destined for Germany. A significant number of children are trafficked within Burkina Faso.

Cameroon

20. Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for internationally trafficked persons; trafficking also occurs within Cameroon. Children are trafficked from and through Cameroon to other West African countries for indentured or domestic servitude, farm labor, and sexual exploitation. Women are principally trafficked from Cameroon to Europe for sexual exploitation.

Cote d'Ivoire

121. Cote d'Ivoire is a source and destination for internationally and domestically trafficked persons. Trafficking also occurs within Cote d'Ivoire. Ivoirian women and children are trafficked to more distant African, European, and Middle Eastern countries. Children are trafficked to Cote d'Ivoire from Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ghana, Benin and Togo for indentured or domestic servitude, farm labor, and prostitution. Women are principally trafficked from Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, and Asian countries to Cote d'Ivoire.

Gabon

122. Gabon is a destination country for trafficked persons, primarily children from West and Central Africa (specifically Benin, Togo and Nigeria) for domestic servitude and work in the informal commercial sector. Gabon has a significant immigrant population (20% of total population), which serves to increase the number of children brought/sent to Gabon.

Ghana

123. Ghana is a source, transit and destination country for trafficked persons, primarily children. Trafficking of children for labor and sexual exploitation in the informal sector -- as porters, shop assistants, in mines and in fishing communities -- occurs internally, and sexual and physical abuse of these trafficked children occurs. Trokosi is a form of religious servitude for a limited period of time, involving work and training in traditional religious practices at a fetish shrine in atonement for a crime allegedly committed by a member of the girl's family. Young women are trafficked to Europe and the Middle East for sexual exploitation. Children between the ages of 7 and 17 are trafficked to and from the neighboring countries of Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, and Nigeria to work as farm workers, laborers or household help. Children trafficked from Burkina Faso transit Ghana on the way to Cote d'Ivoire.
Guinea

124. Guinea's role in the regional trafficking in persons appears to be growing as a transit area for Nigerian girls and women trafficked to Europe for the sex trade. In July 2001, Guinean police intercepted 33 Nigerian girls and women in Conakry and arrested 15 Nigerian traffickers attempting to smuggle the 33 victims to Spain. (The girls and women were repatriated to Nigeria in August and the traffickers were extradited to stand trial in Nigeria.)

Mali

125. Mali is a source and destination country for trafficked persons, primarily children. Children from Mali are trafficked to Cote d'Ivoire to work on cotton and cocoa plantations or for domestic servitude. Women from Nigeria are trafficked to Mali for sexual exploitation.

Nigeria

126. Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficked persons. The majority of trafficking from Nigeria involves females destined for Europe; Italian authorities estimate that 18,000 Nigerian prostitutes work in Italy, most of them the victims of traffickers. Nigerians, primarily women and children, are also trafficked to work on farms or as domestic servants in other African countries, including Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, and Benin. Other significant destination countries for trafficked Nigerians include the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Spain, France and the Middle East. Nigeria also serves as a transit hub for trafficking in West Africa and to a lesser extent, a destination

point for young children from nearby West African countries. There is also evidence of trafficking of children and women within Nigeria.

Togo

127. Togo is a source and transit country for trafficked persons, primarily children. Togolese are trafficked to Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Nigeria, the Middle East (specifically Saudi Arabia and Kuwait), and Europe (primarily France and Germany) for indentured or domestic servitude, work in the informal commercial sector, farm labor and sexual exploitation. Children trafficked from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria transit Togo.

The Four Pillars: Three P's and a D

128. The Africa Bureau's strategy for addressing the Trafficking in Persons problem in West and Central Africa follows the USG's strategic framework laid out in the President's Executive Memorandum of March 11, 1998. This international strategy to combat Trafficking in Women and Children is commonly referred to as the "Three Ps," focusing USG efforts on: A) PROSECUTION of traffickers using the enforcement of existing laws; B) PREVENTION of trafficking of would-be victims in vulnerable source areas; and C) PROTECTION of trafficking victims through rescue, shelter and reintegration into society. A fourth component of the Bureau strategy is a DIPLOMATIC approach targeted to raise the profile of this issue with high-level host government officials eliciting their support and input in order to enhance but not duplicate host governments' and others' initiatives. This diplomatic effort will precede the start of programs to promote Prevention, Prosecution and Protection goals and then will be pursued concurrently with these efforts. The second component of the diplomatic approach would be programmatic and would focus efforts to integrate anti-trafficking objectives into existing educational, democracy and good governance programs (particularly through USAID).

PROSECUTION

129. The Bureau's anti-trafficking strategy for West Africa will encourage host governments to develop and implement country specific and regional action plans to combat trafficking, such as the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking that Mali and Cote d'Ivoire have developed. In December 2001, the heads of state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) met in Dakar and formally adopted a resolution and plan of action to combat Trafficking in Persons. The resolution and plan of action, both of which focus on developing uniform laws and enforcement efforts, had been developed during a special ECOWAS meeting on TIP in Accra October 23-24.

130. Host governments should be encouraged to structure their laws to ensure the effective prosecution of those involved in trafficking in persons, distinct from any laws punishing those involved in voluntary prostitution. Criminal charges and penalties for trafficking in persons - a crime involving coercion, force or deception - should be harsher than any crimes and penalties associated with prostitution or unforced child labor. Efforts will involve USG programs designed to train and strengthen local law enforcement and criminal justice systems officials to more effectively apprehend and prosecute traffickers, to detect victims, and to cooperate regionally in these efforts. Porous borders between countries with trafficking problems require training of law enforcement and criminal justice official to identify potential trafficking victims; e.g. large numbers of unaccompanied children. Such training should also be extended to members of ECOWAS along with efforts to create an ECOWAS mechanism to unify regional enforcement efforts against TIP. Posts and the Bureau should urge ECOWAS to follow up on implementation of the December 2001 Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons adopted at the ECOWAS Heads of State Summit in Dakar.

PREVENTION

131. The vast majority of women and children trafficked within and out of West and Central Africa come from this same region. Therefore, prevention programs designed to address at-risk source areas are key to the success of this strategy. Prevention efforts, conducted in concert with host governments, our Peace Corps, international and local NGOs, and trade unions, will focus on increasing public awareness through a culturally appropriate public diplomacy campaign at the grass-roots level regarding the dangers of trafficking and providing information on the worst forms of child labor. In order to curb the trafficking of persons, we need to focus resources on vulnerable or at-risk populations, especially young women and children before they become trafficking victims. Missions would be asked to work with host governments, NGOs and parents, in determining the target audience and how best to reach them.

132. Recognizing that a key cause of trafficking lies in the lack of alternative economic opportunities, we will work through existing DOL and USAID programs to help foster workforce development. This strengthening of labor opportunities can take a number of forms, including micro-credit schemes, labor market information systems, and skills training.

133. In the initial implementation stages of the Bureau's prevention strategy, the Bureau envisages that Public Diplomacy (PD), the Peace Corps, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) will be instrumental in getting the message out, increasing awareness and sensitivity to the issue, and identifying country-specific areas where USG assistance would be most useful. NGOs and host governments should be encouraged to network with each other on best practices and coordinate anti-trafficking efforts such as research to study the magnitude and incidence of trafficking and trafficking patterns. They should also be encouraged to collaborate with government agencies and other NGOs doing work in related areas such as micro-credit assistance for women, literacy programs and legislative reform.

134. USG programs could provide NGOs with technical assistance on grant proposal drafting and on regional research and information gathering. Regional cooperation in combating trafficking in women and children and providing assistance to victims can be facilitated through developing a regional NGO network through the Internet, meetings, and workshops. NGOs and law enforcement authorities should be encouraged to cooperate to prevent trafficking, to assist victims, and to facilitate the apprehension of traffickers. NGOs often have inside information and experience that could facilitate the arrest of traffickers by local police.

PROTECTION

135. The third part of the Bureau's strategy for West Africa includes working with host governments and NGOs to establish domestic and international protection and assistance. Initiatives such as rescue and reintegration projects should be geared toward providing trafficking victims with immediate, short-term shelter and health care as well as assisting governments and local NGOs to build the capacity for longer-term shelter and education programs with an aim of successfully reintegrating victims into society. Working through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), we hope to help build a regional structure for the efficient repatriation of victims to their country of origin from wherever they are intercepted. This would require bilateral repatriation agreements and the creation of a regional communications network for immigration and police authorities to coordinate the transfer of and care for trafficking victims.

DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY

¶36. USG anti-TIP policy, particularly our efforts to implement the 2000 Protection of Trafficking Victims Acts, needs to be conveyed to governments in the sub-region in a clear and consistent fashion. The Regional Affairs Office of the AF Bureau will work with posts to develop regional and country-specific talking points for use in conveying USG anti-TIP goals to host governments and regional organizations (e.g. ECOWAS). AF/RA will also ensure that the TIP issue is raised during bilateral talks with AF governments and the governments of relevant European destination countries, as appropriate. Diplomatic efforts will be made to encourage governments to ratify the Transnational Organized Crime Convention (Palermo Convention of December 2000) Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. Working with posts and other bureaus, AF/RA will monitor the effectiveness of anti-TIP law enforcement efforts in various countries, maintaining statistics on arrests and prosecutions of traffickers.

Tactical Approach

¶37. In order to best advance the above "Three Ps," this strategy will use the following means:

--Improved intra-USG donor coordination (led by G/TIP and including USAID, DRL, INL, DOL) both at the Washington and field levels;

--Greater Coordination with International Donors (World Bank, the UK's Department for International Development, the EU and Norway's NORAD);

--Engagement with/funding of regional organizations (ECOWAS) and International Organizations (ILO-IPEC, IOM, the UN Center for International Crime Programs--UNCICP, UNICEF); balanced with

--Direct funding for host government and/or local NGOs when feasible and deemed most effective.

Regional Trafficking Resource Database

¶38. In order to better understand and manage a coordinated USG anti-trafficking strategy, it is important to have a compendium of up-to-date and comprehensive research materials, including data on organizations that are addressing the trafficking problem and identification of programs that have or will be directed against TIP in the region. A regional trafficking resource database, compiled by AF/RA and accessible to U.S. Missions and NGOs in the region, would include recent reports, surveys, project documents, e-mail addresses of key organizations and individuals and information on trafficking disseminated by the Department's Public Diplomacy offices. The information contained in the regional trafficking database would be compiled by using reputable government and non-government sources.

¶39. The regional trafficking resource database would also hold information on victim assistance needs, government responses and programs ranging from law enforcement and social protection to indirect programs (largely run by USAID) that address the fundamental causes of child trafficking and child labor (such as lack of education and employment), as well as efforts to eliminate the practice of trafficking. In addition, governments and NGOs would benefit by sharing information and best practices within the region to enhance their approach to the problem and facilitate regional efforts. Ideally, this resource database would foster the creation of regional and local networks - formal and informal - among NGOs and donor governments in the region.

USG Resources

¶40. The AF Bureau will work with posts and other Washington agencies (AID and DOL) to develop anti-trafficking programs to be funded by ESF, INL and PRM

funds. ESF allocations for Africa, in particular, will be reviewed systematically for the inclusion of anti-TIP programs on a regional and country-specific basis. Posts will coordinate more closely with other donors (e.g. DFID, NORAD, and the World Bank) and international implementing partners (e.g. UNICEF, ILO-IPEC, IOM) to enhance shared funding of trafficking programs in the region. Existing programs in the region for primary education, micro-credit, gender equality, sustainable agriculture, labor and economic development will be reviewed and, where appropriate, will adopt anti-trafficking in persons goals.

Short-term Objectives (June 2002-December 2002)

Diplomacy

--Raise the trafficking issue with host governments within the context of the broad range of bilateral relations (just as we have done with HIV/AIDS) to ensure that the host governments are aware, on-board and committed.

--Strengthen the anti-trafficking focus of existing educational programs like the Education Democracy and Development Initiative (EDDI).

--Encourage host governments to ratify the UN 2000 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and the December 2001 ECOWAS Resolution and Plan of Action and to develop and enact national legislation to prosecute traffickers and criminalize both trafficking and forced child labor.

Prevention

--Conduct targeted awareness campaign in identified source communities using posters, skits and other communications techniques best suited to a largely illiterate audience.
--Create a resource database of anti-trafficking offices, organizations and reports, to be available via Internet, for U.S. missions and local host country counterparts.

--Encourage NGOs and U.S. agencies that provide technical assistance in general to support efforts to target TIP source communities, especially in the area of secondary education.

Prosecution

--Encourage host governments to ratify the UN Protocol and the ECOWAS resolution, and to draft and enact national legislation criminalizing TIP.

--Provide technical assistance to boost investigative and prosecutorial capacity of host government law enforcement agencies fighting TIP.

Protection

--Design and begin implementation of technical assistance to host governments to create an effective framework for receiving/protecting victims of trafficking and reintegrating them into society.

--Begin providing seed money (non-recurring costs) for the start-up of NGO shelters in source countries.

Long-Term Objectives (January 2003 - June 2004)

Prevention

--Help promote an accountability system to monitor various cash crops suspected of involving child labor, complementing programs such as the Sustainable Tree-Crop Program in Cote d'Ivoire.

--Assist host governments' implementation of preexisting goals of universal, compulsory primary education at little or no cost to students and their families.

--Integrate anti-TIP objectives into existing USG assistance programs for primary education, micro-credit, gender equality, sustainable agriculture, labor and economic development.

Prosecution

--Contingent on the enactment of TIP laws, encourage the designation of dedicated and accountable anti-TIP law enforcement entities that cooperate within the region and work locally with community-based watch/prevention groups.

--Encourage expanded prosecution of corrupt officials involved in TIP.

--Encourage host governments' cooperation with US law enforcement TIP investigations, such as U.S. Customs Service investigations of forced child labor used in the production of items destined to become U.S. imports.

Protection

--Facilitate reintegration of trafficking victims into their home settings through specialized school programs and vocational training.

--Strengthen or create a regional network among government agencies in the region for repatriation of trafficking victims, probably through IOM.

(end)

ANDREWS